

ASH WEDNESDAY

February 14, 2024

Ripping Cloth

AS WE GATHER:

Ash Wednesday in the life of the church is a solemn occasion when the people of God remember and contemplate the depth of humanity's sin. Individuals are readily marked with the sign of the cross with ashes that traditionally have been prepared from the burned remnants of last year's palm branches. On this day we wear the mark of human frailty and mortality. To dust and ashes we shall return. Just as we are mindful of our sin, this liturgy thrusts us into a vital remembrance of our Baptism, through which God has cleansed us from sin, marked us as His redeemed children, and granted us unmerited immortality.

NO PRESERVICE MUSIC

Silence is observed at the beginning of this liturgy. The congregation is encouraged to meditate on the following texts: "...rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and He relents over disaster. Joel 2:13 (ESV)

OPENING HYMN: *To Thee, Omniscient Lord of All* *LSB 613*

PREPARATION

INVOCATION:

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

PRAYERS:

P: God of all mercies, known and unknown, on account of the blood of Christ, You promise to forgive all those who repent of their sin. Enable us to reflect upon the great sacrifice that Christ made on our behalf, and by faith may we begin to comprehend our utter freedom from sin. May we readily hear Your Word of forgiveness proclaimed, partake of Your body and blood in bread and wine, and stalwartly believe in Your love that shapes our temporal and eternal existence. In Jesus' name we pray.

C: Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Each person in attendance is invited to come forward to the Communion rail in single file and receive the sign of the cross in ashes upon their forehead remembering

P: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."
(Genesis 3:19)

Let us pray:

Lord, let these ashes be a reminder to us that we are but dust. May these ashes imprinted on our foreheads remind us of our mortality, and by Your holy Word may we be brought to true repentance, trusting solely in Christ as the source of our eternal salvation. May our Lenten journey, begun this day, continue to propel us forward to the victorious day of resurrection and triumph. In Jesus' name we pray.

C: Amen.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION:

P: We stand before the Lord today, gathered in His holy name, aware of our sinfulness, confessing that we deserve nothing but His eternal wrath and punishment. We have sinned against God in thought, word, and deed. We confess the truth of God's holy Word; "this people draw near with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, while their hearts are far from Me." Today we earnestly seek forgiveness in Christ. We boldly confess our sins before God and one another pledging our intention to turn our hearts from sin toward the living Christ.

C: We confess to You, O Lord, that our lives have not truly reflected what our mouths have spoken. We have proclaimed love for You, but have been loveless. We have boasted of our faithfulness, and have been faithless. We have sinned against You by failing to live as Your redeemed and beloved children. Although we deserve only punishment, we ardently seek Your forgiveness in Christ, our Lord.

P: Take heart. Do not be afraid. God in Christ Jesus has heard your cry for mercy and grants you His forgiveness. God desires all men, women, and children to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. It is God Himself who has given His Son Jesus Christ to die for you and for all people. And it is God Himself who raised Christ Jesus from the dead that you might have eternal life. Be confident in what He speaks to you today---"I, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto you, and in the stead and by

SERMON
"Ripping Cloth"

Joel 2:13

NICENE CREED:

(Back inside cover of hymnal)

BIDDING PRAYER:

P: Let us pray that we might faithfully keep vigil this Lenten season.

Lord, protect us in the struggle against the Adversary and all evil. As we begin the Lenten journey make this season holy by the continual proclamation of Your Word and the administration of Your Sacraments. As Your children, may we respond with contrite hearts, and a genuine Christ-centered discipline during this most holy season. Grant this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

C: Amen.

P: Let us contemplate in prayer our need for redemption.

Father in heaven, the light of Your truth bestows sight to darkened sin-filled eyes. May this season of repentance increase our awareness of the undeserved blessing of Your forgiveness and the gift of salvation. Grant this through Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

P: Let us pray for all who are in bondage to sin, needing to be set free from sin and its stain.

Lord Jesus, our bondage to sin moved You to sacrifice Yourself that we may have eternal life. Freedom has been won for us by the blood You shed, yet many still suffer from bondage to sin and unbelief. Have mercy upon them and enable them to come to know Your love and grace. Grant this to Your glory and praise.

C: Amen.

P: Let us pray for all who are sick, all who are suffering, and all who are filled with grief.

Almighty God, heavenly Father, You know our hearts. When we are facing trials, when we live with the anguish of sickness or death, You alone understand the pain we feel. Through Your Spirit, fill our hearts with hope. Enable those who suffer the ability to see beyond temporal pain and suffering, and by Your grace, keep all eyes focused upon Christ and the eternal life we have in His name. Grant this in the name of Christ Jesus.

C: Amen.

P: We ask all of this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

SACRAMENT

PREFACE:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And with your spirit.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is good and right so to do.

P: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God. You bid Your people cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast. Renew our zeal in faith and life, and bring us to the fullness of grace that belongs to the children of God. Therefore, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

SANCTUS: (Tune: DUNDEE, LSB 526)

*O holy, holy, holy God,
You gave Your Son for me
And on the cross He bled and died,
And now Your child, I am.*

*Hosanna to the living God;
Hosanna to His name.
The people cry "Hosanna, Lord!"
And bless His name on high.*

*All praise to You most holy God.
Let all the heav'ns above
And all the earth down here below
Sing glory to Your name.*

(c) Rev. Russell A. Nebhut, 2003

LORD'S PRAYER:

P: Lord remember us in Your Kingdom, and teach us to pray:

All: Our Father who art in heaven, ...

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

AGNUS DEI: (Tune: DUNDEE, LSB 526)

*Lord Jesus Christ, O Lamb of God,
You shed Your blood for me.
Your body nailed, Your blood outpoured,
Here now You come to me.*

*What holy gifts I now receive---
Your body and Your blood---
What precious gifts You give to me,
Salvation now I see.*

(c) Rev. Russell A. Nebhut, 2003

DISTRIBUTION HYMNS:

<i>On My Heart Imprint Your Image</i>	LSB 422
<i>Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent</i>	LSB 621
<i>Lord Jesus Christ, You Have Prepared</i>	LSB 622

NUNC DIMITTIS: (Tune: EVAN, LSB 707)

*Lord, let Your servant go in peace
According to Your Word.
My eyes have seen salvation sure
In what I here received.*

*Lord, let me go into the world,
A world that needs to know
You gave Your life for love of all.
I shall Your glory tell.*

(c) Rev. Russell A. Nebhut, 2003

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT:

P: Lord Jesus, here we have received the precious gift of Your holy body and blood. Here You have granted us true forgiveness and life. Enable us to live today as Your redeemed children, rejoicing in the forgiveness of our sins and emboldened to proclaim Your praises in this world for You live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

C: Amen.

BENEDICTION

CLOSING HYMN: *My Song Is Love Unknown* LSB 430

BAPTISMAL RENEWAL:

P: Having confessed our sins, received the absolution, heard His Word, and received our Lord's body and blood in His Supper, we now remind ourselves of our Baptism into Christ's saving work.

C: "I have been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Silence Prayer

Please join us each Wednesday for a mid-week Lenten service at St. Paul Lutheran at 6:00 pm.

LITURGICAL PRACTICE DURING LENT

From Ash Wednesday on the use of the organ and other instruments may be restricted to support the singing of the congregation and choir. Flowers are customarily not placed in the chancel during Lent. Music before and after the service (especially during Ash Wednesday) should be omitted. The color for the season is purple, suggesting sobriety.

At the Divine Service (those celebrated on Sundays) the Hymn of Praise and Gloria in Excels is omitted. During the most solemn times of the year the church holds to the older way of doing thing. The absence of the Gloria reflects earlier times when that hymn had not become a part of the liturgy.

On Ash Wednesday the entire liturgy is celebrated with a note of austerity to reflect the character of the day—a day of solemn corporate confession when the congregation laments the sins of God's people and commits itself corporately to assist each member in preparing for a godly celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ in liturgy and life. Both the name "Ash Wednesday" and the ancient tradition suggest the imposition of ashes on this day as a reminder of our human frailty and mortality and as a sign of our repentance, sorrow and need for grace.

Lent is a good time to encourage oneself to use the sign of the cross at the Invocation. "The sign of the cross is made in remembrance of Baptism, when Christians are first marked with the cross and washed in the name of the Holy Trinity."